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# Some Facts

About the

## Old Swedes Church

Wilmington, Delaware



THE CHURCH AFTER 1774 AND BEFORE 1802

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Holy Trinity (Old Swedes') Church, began its history in 1638, when the first Swedish Colonists erected their first crude place of worship on the banks of the Christiana River.

In 1698, under the pastorate of Eric Biork, a Swedish Missionary, the present Church Building was erected. William Penn contributed fifty pounds (\$250) towards this building.

Until 1790, Holy Trinity Church was under the jurisdiction of the Swedish Lutheran Church. At that time it was transferred by the Swedish Missionary Society to the Protestant Episcopal Church, under whose jurisdiction it has ever since remained.

About 1820 the first branch of the old parish was established by the secession of some of its members to form St. Andrew's Parish, Wilmington, whose Church build-

ing. was consecrated by Bishop White on October 1st, 1829.

The present building was the parish church of Holy Trinity Congregation until 1830, when a new place of worship was erected at Fifth and King Streets, to which the people moved, and the Old Church was closed and abandoned.

For twelve years the building was disused, and fell into a serious state of delapidation. In 1842 it was reopened, put in good repair, and used for occasional services until 1854, when the Vestry of Trinity Parish appointed a regular assistant minister and weekly services were resumed there.

In 1857 St. John's Parish was formed out of Trinity Parish, which gave to that important enterprise, among other interested laymen, Mr. Alexis I. duPont, the Senior Warden and Treasurer of the Parish, and his son Francis G. duPont. The former died before the beautiful new edifice was completed, and the latter was his worthy successor in good works, and became one of the most useful and valued laymen the Church in Delaware has ever possessed.

From 1859 to 1868 the regular services at the Old Church were discontinued, owing to a lack of support due chiefly to the losses

sustained by the formation of St. John's Parish, and even after 1868, until 1883, there were many vicissitudes in the history of the Old Church and its local congregation.

In 1883 the Rev. H. B. Martin was Rector of Trinity Parish, and again the congregation changed its place of worship, this time to its present site on the corner of Delaware Avenue and Adams Street.

Under Dr. Martin's Rectorship, a regular Assistantship in the parish was again established and has been continued to the present time; thus assuring regular services and ministrations in connection with the Old Church, without interruption, during the past thirty years.

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While the constituents of Trinity Parish removed in 1830 from their original place of worship, they never relinquished the ownership of the Old Church and its cemetery, nor the responsibility for their care and maintenance. The congregation worshipping at the Old Church became part of Trinity Parish, and the work which has been carried on there has been under the direction of its Rector and Vestry, in co-operation with a

committee appointed annually by the local congregation.

Though always remaining an integral part of Trinity Parish, the Old Swedes' Church has never been reduced to the status of an ordinary Chapel. Since 1883 it has been formally recognized as a responsible section of the Parish, having equal rights with the up-town congregation in the election of Wardens and Vestrymen for the whole parish, and entitled to three representatives on the Vestry from the membership of Old Swedes' Church. The congregation of the Old Church is also entitled to representation in Diocesan Convention equal to that of any independent parish in the Diocese.

But although Trinity Church has thus maintained the organization of the old parish, and responsibility for the Old Church, it has no claim to a monopoly of interest, to the exclusion of those other congregations which have equally strong ancestral ties with the Mother Church, though dissevered from the ancient corporation.

Old Swedes' Church was the cradle of the whole religious life of this community; for many years the only place of worship in its bounds, and until A. D. 1820, the only Episcopal Church in Wil-

mington. Naturally, therefore, it has retained among its friends and active supporters many persons outside its parochial bounds, whose help has been invaluable in maintaining and furthering its work.

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The services of the Old Church have been hitherto supported by (1) the offerings of the local congregation; (2) contributions from Trinity Church; and (3) gifts received from a selected list of people, inside and outside Trinity Parish, who have annually been appealed to for financial assistance.

All three of these sources of supply are fluctuating and precarious, and the importance of placing the finances of the Old Church on a more stable and permanent basis has long been apparent.

The present effort therefore is to secure an endowment fund of at least *fifty thousand dollars*, the income from which shall be used to perpetuate religious services in the Old Swedes' Church. An approximate income of \$2,500 to be derived therefrom, will be enough to secure the basic expenses of the Church, but not enough to stem generosity, or render unnecessary

the efforts of the local congregation towards a partial self-support.

The Fund will be in the custody of The Trustees of the Diocese of Delaware, for whom the Security Trust and Safe Deposit Co. is the Financial Agent. The income of the Fund will be administered by the Vestry of Trinity Parish, of which the Treasurer of the Old Swedes' Church is always a member. There is ample guarantee therefor that the Fund will be safely conserved and its income properly applied.

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In the Church-yard of Holy Trinity rest the mortal remains of many people whose lives left a permanent impress on their community. A short list of some of the most distinguished among them is as follows:

Major Peter Jaquette, a distinguished officer of the Revolutionary Army.

Rev. Peter Tranberg, Swedish Pastor of the church, who died 1748.

Rt. Rev. Alfred Lee, first Bishop of Delaware.

Rev. Martin D. Dunlap, for fifteen years Vicar of Old Swedes'.

Hon. Richard Bassett, U. S. Senator, Chief Justice, Governor of

Delaware and U. S. Circuit Judge, who died in 1815.

Hon. James A. Bayard, Member of Congress, U. S. Senator, and one of the Commissioners for the Treaty of Ghent in 1813.

Hon. Richard H. Bayard, U. S. Senator, Chief Justice of Delaware, and the first Mayor of the City of Wilmington in 1832.

Hon. James A. Bayard, Jr., U. S. District Attorney and U. S. Senator.

Hon. Thomas F. Bayard, U. S. Senator, Secretary of State of the United States, and Ambassador to England.

Hon. Edward G. Bradford, late U. S. District Judge and father of the present U. S. District Judge.

Levi C. Bird and his wife, who was a sister of Hon. Thomas F. Bayard.

Andrew G. Wilson and his wife and daughter.

Mrs. James H. Wilson, wife of Gen. Wilson.

Wm. H. H. Naff, a man prominent 50 years ago.

Col. John M. Andrews.

William R. Brinckle.

Miss Elizabeth Montgomery, author of "Reminiscences of Wilmington."

Dr. James A. Draper.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles M. Bird,  
parents of John B. Bird.

A large group of French refugees from the Island of San Domingo, including the Garesches, Verriers, etc.

Other names in the Church-yard well-known in the community are as follows: Price, Elliott, Foreman, Vandever, Justis, Stidham, Grubb, and many others.